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ABSTRACT

To assist persons with developmental disabilities in South Dakota to become more independent, productive, and integrated into the community, the South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc. implemented the Volunteer Skills Data System (VSDS). As South Dakota is primarily rural, accessibility to services and programs is a particular concern. Community volunteers can provide individualized assistance, help build self-esteem in the developmentally disabled, and provide a supplemental source of cost-effective manpower for professional services. To implement the project, a taxonomy of 12 volunteer roles was created, to address needs of personal/emotional support, practical problem-solving, family member support, supplemental instruction, advocacy, and community participation. Volunteer applicants acknowledge their level of proficiency for each volunteer role selected, and a microcomputer system is used to match developmentally disabled individuals with appropriate volunteers. A special focus of the VSDS has been intergenerational activities where senior volunteers assist children and youth in need of special or prolonged assistance. (JDD)

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VOLUNTEER SKILLS DATA SYSTEM

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Presentation Title: Volunteer Skills Data System

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Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1984, Public Law 98-527, is to promote independence, productivity, and integration into the community by persons who are developmentally disabled. To assist the developmentally disabled in South Dakota with that purpose the South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc. implemented a Human Development Services - Coordinated Discretionary Funds Program Grant. The duration of the grant period was August 1, 1984, to December 31, 1985.

The intent of the grant was to develop a statewide Volunteer Skills Data System (VSDS), utilizing a unique configuration of capable community volunteers and a micro computer system, to assist persons with developmental disabilities in South Dakota become more independent, productive and integrated into the community. Currently the Volunteer Skills Data System is a viable component of the South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc. encouraging increased normalization opportunities, facilitating practical problem solving, transitioning, and complimenting and supplementing existing professional services, through voluntary citizen participation.

In addition an emphasis of the Volunteer Skills Data is to respond to perceived gaps in the developmental disability service delivery system through utilization of screened and trained community volunteers. It is also designed to expand the personal support systems of persons with developmental disabilities in the urban, rural and Native American reservation areas of South Dakota.

Furthermore, because the Volunteer Skills Data System is statewide and has developed positive community partnerships (see Appendix A&B), client and or student tracking is possible when relocation or change in placement occurs. Also volunteers that would relocate to different communities in South Dakota could be matched in new relationships as volunteer needs are statewide. Depending upon the energy level and interest of the volunteer, nothing precludes continued contact with the previously established relationship.

Rural Focus

South Dakota being primarily rural, sparsely populated and having a large geographic area, creates a dilemma for persons with developmental disabilities and their families. Of particular concern, is learning about appropriate services, accessing those services and being informed about key individuals in their own communities or in other parts of the state that may be available to assist them. According to the Executive Director of the South Dakota Association for Retarded Citizens, in a letter on behalf of the development of the Volunteer Skills Data System, "A major problem faced on a continuing basis by organizations such as the Association for Retarded Citizens is one of accessibility: how supply and demand can come together in the area of fulfilling human needs. All too often an individual or family needing and wanting a program or services, or even a willing volunteer, is unaware that such resources exist, or, how to access those resources."

In the state of South Dakota with a total population of 700,000 people and adequate services sometimes several miles away, utilization of capable community volunteers respond to gaps in the developmental disability delivery system in a variety of ways. Community volunteers can provide personal, individualized assistance, help build self-esteem in the developmentally disabled, avoid conflict of interest, and provide a supplemental source of cost effective manpower for professional services. According to the State Office of Developmental Disabilities there are an estimated 3,288 persons with developmental disabilities in the state. Very often persons with developmental disabilities and their families in South Dakota become isolated from their own communities, even though they may live and work in the midst of it. The Volunteer Skills Data System helps to bridge this moat of isolation.

Approach and Methodology

The Volunteer Skills Data System is an innovative, organized method of bringing together persons with developmental disabilities, requiring assistance in becoming more independent, active, contributing members of their community and capable volunteers in meaningful relationships. The Volunteer Skills Data System has developed a taxonomy of twelve (12) volunteer roles to address needs of personal/emotional support, practical problem solving, family member support, supplemental instruction, advocacy and community participation (see Appendix C). An effective method for recruiting capable volunteers is utilized entitled, Key Individual Recruitment System (KIRS). Essentially, KIRS is a networking approach to identifying key individuals in a given community shown to be active, sensitive to the needs of the handicapped and/or possess specific abilities.

Community volunteers utilized are required to complete an application (see Appendix D), provide the names of three references, other than family (see Appendix E), and indicate up-to-five volunteer roles in which they wish to participate. In addition, they are asked to acknowledge the level of proficiency they possess for each volunteer role selected, keyed to our proficiency taxonomy. Also liability coverage of the volunteer applicant is determined, particularly if they will be providing transportation. Monitoring of volunteer activities is conducted on at least a monthly basis through review of Periodic Volunteer Reports (see Appendix F).

An integral component of the Volunteer Skills Data System is utilization of a micro computer system (see Appendix G). A unique computer software program was designed to consider and retain information regarding volunteer identification data, availability, and up-to-five skill and proficiency levels of the volunteer. A parallel software program was designed for developmentally disabled participants.

Practical Implications for Rural Education

According to the State of South Dakota publication entitled, "Status Report: Special Education in South Dakota for School Year 1985-1986", public school enrollment figures totaled 123,875. The special education

enrollment figures totaled 17,406. This count included all categories and ages. South Dakota's special education enrollment represents 14.05% of the total school enrollment.

Children and youth in need of special or prolonged assistance, in particular, those with developmental disabilities very often find themselves in educational settings that require unique configurations and adaptations apart from the mainstream system. In any given school day depending on the nature of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), they may attend a variety of classroom settings and receive instruction or consultation from several different teachers or therapists, beyond what the mainstream youth will normally experience. In addition, they may require special transportation to receive necessary therapies.

Also acceptance by their mainstream peer group is limited due to the stigma of having a developmental disability, coupled with the myths and stereotypes that continue to prevail. In addition youths with developmental disabilities can become vulnerable to those who would take advantage of their functioning or reasoning ability. Further, recreational, social and group opportunities by the mainstream peer group is limited due to the stigma of being associated with an impaired person.

Families of youths with developmental disabilities are also impacted by their continuing efforts to obtain an appropriate educational program for their impaired son or daughter. They are sometimes overwhelmed by the role they are placed in of deciding the unique educational needs their son or daughter has and factoring that into what the local school district will provide. In addition as their son or daughter draws closer to the completion of their secondary education, families are then faced with decisions about post-secondary alternatives.

Youth's with developmental disabilities experience educational settings that at times appear uncertain and disruptive. They also feel a sense of not belonging or knowing where they fit in. In essence they could benefit from additional stability, continuity, a balance of internal/external support and opportunities for developing personal relationships.

Families at times feel isolated, even from the community in which they live and frequently do not know where to turn for assistance. Their needs focus around accessing accurate, reliable information and local resource people available to assist them in understanding.

The capabilities of the Volunteer Skills Data System in rural education are diverse. Voluntary citizen participation can play an integral role in complimenting and supplementing special education services through a variety of ways. Volunteers can provide increased one-to-one assistance, role modeling, help disseminate information regarding children and parent rights, serve as a resource person or liaison for children/youth, families and educational settings, provide additional tutoring assistance where appropriate, self-help skills training, transportation, facilitate transition from educational to post-educational alternatives through future planning, and provide personal/emotional support to children, youth and families.

Most recently, the Volunteer Skills Data System began exploring the possibilities of intergenerational activities. Whereby, senior volunteers, ages 55 and older, could assist children and youth in need of special or prolonged assistance. According to a publication entitled, A Guide to Intergenerational Programs, "In many communities the school system seems to invite the development of intergenerational programs. The schools have excess space because of decreasing enrollments, generally in convenient locations; and the schools, of course, have the children. They also usually need more volunteers-because of the increase in the number of mothers employed outside the home and unavailable as school volunteers. Resources in most schools are being stretched to cover the basics, reducing the potential for individual attention to school children. Older persons can offer experience, skills, patience, and time. They can meet some of the needs of many systems.

Intergenerational programs in schools can improve students' skills, levels of achievement, and self-esteem. Older persons can motivate and stimulate, while offering a positive adult role model. There are significant benefits to the older persons as well-primarily the opportunity to make a personal contribution, to continue to be involved in the community, and to be challenged and stimulated."

The Volunteer Skills Data System promotes the philosophy that screened, trained, and monitored volunteers can play a legitimate role in supplementing and complimenting the developmental disability service delivery system in South Dakota. In addition, the Volunteer Skills Data System is a viable approach to impacting the rural education system in South Dakota when perceived as an independent, innovative, free from conflict of interest community resource. Also a strength of the Volunteer Skills Data System is the perception that it is not direct service providing and only intended to compliment and supplement existing professional services of the developmentally disabled. Consequently, community partnerships have been formed with little or no resistance and with an attitude of cooperation. The Volunteer Skills Data System has been fully operational for approximately a year and a half and continues to serve as an integral part of the South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc.

REFERENCES

1). Executive Director, South Dakota Association for Retarded Citizens, Support Letter, March 9, 1984.

2). South Dakota Office of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health, Numbers of Developmentally Disabled People, March 1986.

3). State of South Dakota, Department of Education and Cultural Affairs, Status Report: Special Education in South Dakota For School Year 1985-86.

4). National Association of State Units on Aging Washington, D.C., A Guide to Intergenerational Programs, May 1984.

- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS -

The South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc. gratefully acknowledges the interest, support, collaboration and opportunities provided by the following South Dakota agencies and organizations, in the development of a Volunteer Skills Data System: the State Office of Developmental Disabilities & Mental Health; the State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council; the South Dakota Association for Retarded Citizen's - State Office and affiliate chapters; State Office of Special Education; the South Dakota American Association on Mental Deficiency; the South Dakota Association of Community Based Services; the South Dakota Guardianship Program, Inc.; the Center for the Developmentally Disabled; the United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota Development Corporation; the Sioux Nation Commission on Aging; the South Dakota Office of Volunteerism; Redfield State Hospital and School; and numerous statewide service organizations.

The South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc. would also like to extend special thanks to the Computer Center of Pierre, South Dakota for providing quality computer equipment, initial training, and technical assistance in development of a unique custom designed software program. In addition, special thanks is given to the Shared Communication and Assistance Network (SCAN) of Silver Spring, Maryland for providing further technical assistance in refinement of our software program and modem utilization orientation.

Further, the South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc. would like to express their sincere appreciation to those very special volunteers that were willing to be challenged to expand the personal support network of persons with developmental disabilities in South Dakota. South Dakota has a tradition of volunteerism and we found that traditional continues across the state, at the community level, and through individual citizen participation.

Finally, the South Dakota Advocacy, Inc. would like to thank the Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Human Development Services and their Coordinated Discretionary Funds Program for the funding opportunity to develop such a vital project as the Volunteer Skills Data System. Appreciation is also extended to the Administration on Developmental Disabilities in Washington, D.C. and the Regional Office in Kansas City, Missouri, as well as the Federal Assistance Financing Branch in Rockville, Maryland, for their continued support and technical assistance during the length of the project.

It is the hope and anticipation of the South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc. that the Volunteer Skills Data System will continue to become an integral part of the developmental disability service delivery system in South Dakota.

SCAN
Shared Communication and Assistance Network

April 21,1986

Mr. Ron Frame
Program Director
South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc.
221 S. Central Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Ron,

Please accept my sincerest thanks for the opportunity to work with you and your staff on your most innovative project. During my visit in November I found your staff to be highly capable and well-trained in both the technical and day-to-day operations of your project. I was especially impressed with the degree of commitment that Bob Kean has relative to the current and future involvement with volunteers there in South Dakota. In these uncertain budgetary times this strategy takes on even more significance than it had at its inception.

The software that you have developed to assist in the matching of volunteers provides a time saving, information management tool without which this sort of task would not be possible on a scale that would be of any real help. Especially impressive is the fact that it was developed on an inexpensive, commercially available database package that is operational on IBM, Apple, and other micro computers.

The only suggestion I have for strengthening the project concerns the development of a wider funding base that will facilitate access to professionals in other arenas that could benefit from the technology and programmatic strategy that you have developed. It is recommended that for that sort of cross-pollenization to happen, local or state funding must be provided to maintain, if not widen, your already outstanding efforts.

If I can be of any further assistance to you, please don't hesitate to call. Accept my congratulations on a job well done.

Sincerely,

Larry Searcy
Director, SCAN

American Association of University Affiliated Programs For Persons with Developmental Disabilities
8605 Cameron Street, Suite 406 • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 • (301) 588-8252

APPENDIX C

AREAS OF VOLUNTARY CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Expressive Volunteer: Establish a personal friendship.

Instrumental Volunteer: Help solve practical problems.

Associate Volunteer: Share extensive knowledge or expertise of a specific nature.

Crisis Volunteer: Intervene in a health threatening situation and/or provide emotional support.

Domestic Volunteer: Provide emotional support to parents, children and other family members of developmentally disabled persons.

Cross-Cultural Volunteer: Assist Native American developmentally disabled persons, families and other ethnic groups.

Tutorial Volunteer: Provide voluntary tutorial assistance to children identified as needing special education.

Advisory Board/Council Volunteer: Provide volunteer leadership assistance to handicap organizations.

Liaison Volunteer: Act on behalf of developmentally disabled persons between service providing agencies.

Residential Volunteer: Assist developmentally disabled persons placed in community living facilities, nursing homes and state institutions.

Fundraiser Volunteer: Assist in accessing and generating financial support for handicap organizations.

Recruitment Volunteer: Assist in the identification of potential volunteers.

Volunteer Skills Data System
South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc.
221 South Central Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 1-800-742-8108 or 224-8294

Project Staff: Ron Frame, Program Director
Susan Kortan, Administrative Assistant

APPENDIX D

VOLUNTEER SKILLS DATA SYSTEM
VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

NAME_____ PHONE(HONE)_____ (WORK)_____

ADDRESS_____ DATE OF BIRTH_____ SEX: M___ F___

_____
CITY STATE ZIP CODE COUNTY

BEST TIMES, DAYS AND PLACE TO REACH YOU_____

_____

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, WHOM MAY WE CONTACT (NAME & PHONE)?_____

CHOOSE UP TO FIVE VOLUNTEER ROLES YOU WOULD PARTICIPATE IN. CHECK YOUR APPROPRIATE PROFICIENCY LEVEL.
(See attached descriptions, detach and keep)

	INTEREST ONLY	SERIOUS STUDENT	COLLEGE OR TECHNICAL SCHOOL DEGREE	ADVANCED DEGREE/ LICENSED PROFESSIONAL	CONSULTANT
(1)EXPRESSIVE VOLUNTEER					
(2)INSTRUMENTAL VOLUNTEER					
(3)ASSOCIATE VOLUNTEER					
(4)CRISIS VOLUNTEER					
(5)DOMESTIC VOLUNTEER					
(6)CROSS CULTURAL VOLUNTEER					
(7)TUTORIAL VOLUNTEER					
(8)BOARD/COUNCIL VOLUNTEER					
(9)LIAISON VOLUNTEER					
(10)RESIDENTIAL VOLUNTEER					
(11)FUNDRAISER VOLUNTEER					
(12)RECRUITMENT VOLUNTEER					

VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION/INSURANCE:

DO YOU HAVE A DRIVER'S LICENSE?_____ DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER_____

DO YOU HAVE AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY INSURANCE?_____ LIST COMPANY_____

TIME AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSON OR VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE.

_____ MONDAY	_____ THURSDAY	_____ MORNINGS
_____ TUESDAY	_____ FRIDAY	_____ AFTERNOONS
_____ WEDNESDAY	_____ SATURDAY	_____ EVENINGS
	_____ SUNDAY	

REFERENCES (Other than relatives)

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
1._____		(HOME)_____ (WORK)_____
2._____		(HOME)_____ (WORK)_____
3._____		(HOME)_____ (WORK)_____

VOLUNTEER RELEASE

Having been informed about the purpose and activities of the Volunteer Skills Data System, I hereby give permission for information about myself, contained in the volunteer application, to be placed in the computer system.

It is my understanding that personal information contained in this application will not be given to any individual or entity without my expressed permission.

_____ _____
Volunteer Applicant Signature Date

APPENDIX E

VOLUNTEER SKILLS DATA SYSTEM

REFERENCE FORM

Reference Name _____

Applicant Name _____

1. How long have you know the applicant? _____

2. What is your relationship to the applicant? _____

3. Please select the one word or phrase which is most accurate.

   A. The applicant is: unreliable, usually reliable, very reliable

   (Staff - circle response. Ask reference for an example of a situation or circumstance which led him/her to select that particular response.)

   B. The applicant's attitude is generally: apathetic, interested, enthusiastic

   (Circle response, ask for example, document)

   C. Emotionally, the applicant: is very stable
   is usually stable
   experiences unusual extremes of excitability or depression

   (Circle, examples, document)

4. Please respond yes, no, or don't know to the following items:

   Is the applicant:

   Patient? _____

   Able to tolerate frustration? _____

   Able to accept advice? _____

   Able to relate to _____ children? _____adults?

   (If a response is no, ask probing questions to get more information and document below.)

5. What makes you feel this applicant might be a good advocate? (Document reply)

6. In your opinion, what limitations or problems in the applicant's past history might affect his/her ability to be an advocate? (Listen very carefully for hints of problem areas. Probe subtly for answers to questions you have.)

7. Do you have any other comments about the applicant?

8. Additional comments by staff.

_____ _____

(Signature of Staff) (Date)

PERODIC VOLUNTEER REPORT

Since you are very important to the Volunteer Skills Data System, we need to keep in contact with each other on a monthly basis. We realize you are very busy and your time is valuable; however, would you please check you answers to the questions below and return this report by mail as soon as possible? You are welcome to add any comments.

1. Your name_____

2. Your client's name_____

3. How often did you contact your client this month?

   _____once a week
   _____twice a week
   _____more

4. Did you visit your client in person?

   _____once every two weeks
   _____once a week
   _____more

5. In what activities did you and your client participate?

   _____recreation (specify)_____
   _____visiting places of interest
   _____movies
   _____shopping
   _____trips
   _____client's home
   _____church
   _____other group or organizational meetings
   _____other (specify)_____

6. You may find it helpful for you and your client to set a goal to work toward each month based on your client's needs. If so, please write your plan below.

   a. Goal for past month_____

   _____

   Activities to meet this goal_____

   _____

   Successful?

   _____yes
   _____somewhat
   _____no

b. Goal for next month_____

_____

Comments_____

_____

7. Can the staff help you? We want your ideas, problems, and comments.

_____

_____

Volunteer Skills Data System (VSDS)

-Computer Program Description-

Selecting an appropriate computer system that was cost effective and capable to handle our anticipated data management needs was one of our first tasks. After considerable product research was conducted, the South Dakota Advocacy Project, Inc. (Advocacy Project) decided on acquiring a Kaypro 10 hard disk business computer. The Kaypro 10, more than adequately, met our budgetary and software needs. In addition, the Kaypro 10 is a portable computer that allowed us to conduct demonstrations at conferences and workshops.

Other computer related equipment that was acquired and essential was an Epson FX-100 printer and a DS1200SMT modem. The DS1200SMT modem was acquired to provide us with the capability of communicating with other compatible computer systems for sharing information. In addition, it provides us with electronic mail capabilities, access to computer bulletin boards and other resource databases through the national SCAN (Shared Communication and Assistance Network) program located in Silver Spring, Maryland. SCAN has been developed by the American Association of University Affiliated Programs for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (AAUAP).

After the computer hardware package was acquired and installed the next task was receiving computer training and development of a custom designed software program. These activities were initially provided by the supplier of the Kaypro 10 computer system.

Upon receiving orientation and design of the software program, it was decided to utilize the Dbase II component. Dbase II enabled us to

create a comprehensive and unique database system appropriate for our project needs. The Dbase II also lends itself to easy adding, deleting, editing, displays and prints data from the database, providing a large measure of program/data independence.

The Volunteer Skills Data System software program is designed to browse through volunteer and client files located by county. The files have been programmed and keyed to correspond with both the volunteer and the client application forms. The volunteer file is designed to contain basic information such as: name; address; county; telephone numbers; anniversary date which signifies when the volunteer was approved; skill levels; availability of the volunteer; proficiency levels; and comment section. The client file is essentially designed the same way with a few exceptions such as: sex; birth date; ethnic group; impairment; living arrangement; availability; volunteer preference; expressive and instrumental needs. In addition, a hard copy resource base of the volunteer and client applicants are maintained for back-up purposes, as well as, all computer data is placed on floppy disks.